

The Cloak-and-Dagger Business

THE Central Intelligence Agency is on the hot seat—as well it should be—following last month's debacle in Cuba.

It is clear from published reports, regretted but not denied by the government, that the C. I. A. masterminded the Cuban venture from start to finish.

The searching inquiry now under way into all phases of C. I. A. activities is entirely called for, and it is as certain as anything in Washington, D. C., that the huge cloak-and-dagger agency is in for some major changes, in personnel if not in structure.

UT in focusing upon the C. I. A. as chief scapegoat for the Cuban fiasco, it might be well to avoid sweeping condemnations of our intelligence services.

By the very nature of their work, the spectacular failures of intelligence services become public knowledge, while their successes often remain secret.

One of the major feats of American intelligence that has become common knowledge is the fact that every sizable Soviet missile launching, including failures, is immediately known to United States officials.

It is reported on excellent authority that this success is the result of both electronic "spying" and traditional espionage.

AS for the inquiry ordered by President Kennedy, it is reassuring that this activity is under the direction of Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor.

Taylor brings to this vital task a broad background of cold-war knowledge, a keen and disciplined mind and a far broader outlook than that generally associated with professional military men.

Even if there had been no Cuban adventure, an agency like the C. I. A.—which engages in the most controversial and dangerous types of activities, and which spends many millions of dollars without itemized accountability to Congress—would be in need of constant careful scrutiny by an outside agency of the executive branch.

We have confidence in Taylor's inquiry, and are pleased that the President has reactivated a presidential board to act as a permanent watchdog on this most sensitive of agencies.

The above editorial also appeared in the following other newspaper :

SEATTLE TIMES, WASH. - MAY 4, 1961